years, option of Rebate and Market Development Assistance (MD A), Insurance cover to Khadi artisans, emphasis on improvement of Khadi products, creation of packaging and design facilities, measures to promote marketing, brand building, cluster development, focus on core areas and provision of additional working capital.

Use of chemicals for ripening and colouring of fruits and vegetables

*176. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the shop keepers are using Calcium Carbide for early ripening of mangoes while vegetables are found coloured;

(b) if so, what action is being taken against the offenders; and

(c) whether Government would increase the number of surprise checks to curtail this practice?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER ABFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) to (c) There have been a few Press Reports alleging sale of artificially coloured vegetables and fruits ripened by use of carbide gas in the markets.

The Preveniton of Food Adulteraiton Rules 1955, prohibit the sale of fruits which have been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas, commonly known as carbide gas, and use of unauthorized colouring matter to fruits and vegetables.

The Food Health Authorities of State-UT Governments have been asked from time to time to keep a vigil on unauthorized colouring of food as well as use of carbide gas in ripening of fruits and to take legal action for violation of the Rules.

Government of NCT of Delhi has informed that on conducting raids they have found some retail shop keepers using Calcium Carbide for ripening of mangoes. Similarly, samples of spme

vegetables have been found to be artificially coloured. Prosecutions in both categories of cases arc being launched. The Delhi Government are increasing the number of surprise checks to curtail such mal-practices.

Suspension of LTC facility

*177. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether LTC facility has been discontinued for the Government servants for block year 1998—2001;

(b) whether a large number of the Government servants are yet to avail LTC facility for the said block;

(c) whether a serious discrimination has crept up between the Government servants who have availed opportunity before implementation of the order and those who had not availed the facility by the date; and

(d) if so, the action being taken by Government to restore the LTC facility to eliminate the apparent discrimination?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL AND TRAINING, DEPARTMENT OF PENSIONS AND PENSIONERS WELFARE OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) In pursuance to the Finance Minister's announcement in the Budget for the year 2001-2002, as part of the Expenditure Management Home Town and All India LTC facilities to the Central Government employees except to those who have less than two years service before retirement, have been suspended for a period of two years w.e.f. 2.3.2001. However, personnel of Armed Forces and Central Para-Military Forces and employees posted in the North-Eastern Region including Sikkim have been allowed to avail Home Town LTC.